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ABSTRACT

The impact of travel on older adults was examined through semi-structured interviews of a purposively selected sample of eight individuals ranging in age from 56 to 89 years. The interviews were designed to determine whether interviewees' travel had resulted in any transformative learning experiences. The participants (three Caucasian married couples, one Caucasian single woman, and one African American single man) were selected for the study because they were frequent travelers, and it was thought that they would likely have had significant travel experiences. All were college educated, financially responsible, and involved with their children and grandchildren. None of those interviewed demonstrated any evidence of a perspective transformation resulting from their travels. Nor did the interviews reveal any truly disorienting dilemmas that would likely bring about such transformation. Nevertheless, there was clear evidence of change in the meaning schemes of the study participants. The following four themes emerged from the interviews: (1) a new perspective on "all that we know"; (2) a changed sense of self; (3) disruption of assumptions as a result of new experiences; and (4) a deepened sense of understanding or complexification. (Contains 28 references.) (MN)

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The Impact of Travel on Older Adults

An Exploratory Investigation

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Impact of Travel on Older Adults

An Exploratory Investigation

Older adults are choosing to travel in growing numbers each year (Shoemaker, 1989). Most research on older travelers focuses on how to market travel opportunities to this age segment. The purpose of this investigation is to examine the impact of travel on older adults, with particular attention to experiences that could be considered transformative. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on a purposively-selected sample of eight individuals ranging in ages from 56 to 89. Questions were directed at the nature of their most significant travel experiences and how, if at all, they were changed as a result. Mezirow's (1978, 1981, 1991) conditions of transformative learning were used to consider whether experiences were transformative. Analysis of the results indicated that while transformative learning experiences are rare, changes in meaning schemes as a result of travel were common.

Impact of Travel On Older Adults

An Exploratory Investigation

A recent article in the Wall Street Journal indicated that travel and tourism is a 3.6 trillion dollar per year industry, affecting 231 million jobs. Older and retired adults have more money, time, and energy to see "what's on the other side of the hill" than any other age segment (Wall Street Journal, January 11, 1999). To capture this market the tourist industry today has become a run-away train promising the ticket buyer everything from romance to thrills to serenity. And yet this profitable industry may lure travelers to empty destinations and leave them unfulfilled and disillusioned. The variety of ways in which travel impacts the lives of older travelers is therefore an important problem. This paper focuses on the significance and impact of travel in the lives of older adults.

Current research on older travelers deals mainly with travel preferences of market segments, but as such this information seems to serve marketing interests rather than travelers themselves. Research journals are dominated by insightful studies on tourism and travel, yet the gist seems to be how to capture the older travel market in a wide variety of consumer categories (Bas, 1992; Haber & Lerner, 1998; Hawes, 1988; Horna, 1995; teKoleze, 1995; Komback, 1996; Mackay, Lamont, & Partridge, 1996; Maiztegui-Ornate, 1996; Panic-Kombak,

1996; Reisenger, 1994; Shoemaker, 1989; Veida, 1998, Williams, 1992). Research is needed that more clearly defines the impact of travel experiences on the older individual. The sheer volume of travelers attests to the popularity of travel; however, the impact of that travel needs to be critically addressed. Can travel be more than materialistic shopping trips, mass tour buses that isolate travelers from locations they desire to see, or self-indulgent trips that take advantage of third world countries? Research is needed to determine the impact of travel on the individual and to shed light on how travel may become more meaningful. The current study is intended to address the impact of the travel experience on the traveler and to discover if and when such experiences may be personally transformative.

While travel experiences can surely be profound, their potential to be transformative has not been addressed. Mezirow (1991) defined a transformative experience as " the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and finally making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings" (p. 167). This is the result of a process that begins with some type of experience that does not fit within the boundaries of ones meaning perspective. The meaning perspective is

the framework that one uses to evaluate decisions and is made up of obvious smaller meaning schemes. These schemes include specific knowledge, beliefs, and judgments. Mezirow outlines an entire process of transformation where meaning schemes change, and meaning perspectives change, and as a result eventually there is a complete transformation. This process most often begins with a "disorienting dilemma", such as the loss of a job that is gradually incorporated into one's life, with the end result being a renewal of self-confidence.

In the current research we are seeking to identify travel experiences that may impact travelers rather than simply filling left over time in an older person's life. What little literature there is on the developmental impact of travel in later life, would not support a transformation theme. Continuity theory has been invoked to explain why older adults seek a consistent level of stimulation even while traveling widely (Hawes, 1988). Also, return travel or thematic travel is consistent with theories that emphasize continuity of experience as the key to successful aging (Zimmer, Brawley & Searle, 1995). Nevertheless travel may also be discontinuous in creating perspectives and orientations that are qualitatively different from those that existed for a person before his or her trip. It is in such experiences – however rare they may be – that personal growth and transformation are likely generated. In keeping with this idea, Botterill and Crompton (1996) point out that when one travels there are usually accompanying

issues of separation and attachment, identification, intimacy and rejection. These emotions can be negotiated on a miniature scale during the trip and later applied to more practical integration with daily life. While such effects may lack some of the qualities of transformative learning, they do suggest that travel can produce change individuals.

Travel experience usually creates some degree of learning and learning can be personally transformative under certain conditions. Mezirow (1978, 1981, 1991) outlines ten stages in the transformative process beginning with a disorienting dilemma and ending with self-confidence. In between phases include reflection, critical assessment of one's assumptions, recognition of shared beliefs with others, explorations of options, and trying out new knowledge. In such cases learning is integrated into a more inclusive and discriminating worldview. Transformative learning is distinctly adult. It is a "process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action" (Mezirow, 1990, p.1).

A perspective transformation can occur either through a series of cumulative transformed meaning schemes as a personal crisis, often these experiences are stressful and painful and can threaten the very core of one's existence. Yet, the disorienting dilemma can also simply be a new way of seeing something, or learning something new such as realizing the impact of bicycling or how poverty can impact children.

A common theme of Mezirow's theory is the centrality of critical reflection to this process. Critical reflection is challenging our presuppositions or "becoming aware of our awareness and critiquing it."(Mezirow, 1981, p.13.) Critical reflection is a distinguishing characteristic of adult learning. Anything that moves an individual to a more inclusive, or permeable point of view, will aid an adult's development (Mezirow, 1991). The focus of this study is to understand the ways in which travel has the potential to promote this praxis.

When a radically different and incongruous experience cannot be assimilated into one's meaning perspective, it is either rejected or the meaning perspective is transformed to accommodate it. This is commonly the result of a disorienting dilemma, which can take place in many situations in life including travel. During travel, different experiences and incongruous situations are a normal part of being away from one's neighborhood, states, country, or language. From changing a flat tire on a busy interstate, to being lost in a subway, to seeing glass made in a museum, to being confronted by border police, to riding the "Glacier Express" through the Alps, these disorienting dilemmas may result in changes in our meaning perspective. The word "transformative" is used to describe travel in Ross and Wall's (1999) article on ecotourism. They outlined eco-tourism as travel which is purposeful, environmentally responsible, and transformative. "Many people travel to natural areas to indulge in experiences

with nature…(p. 128)", and these experiences have the potential to instill transformative values (Ross and Wall, 1999).

While the meaning of transformation may lack all the characteristics of Mezirow's transformataive learning, they do share the criterion of permanent personal change. Where are the disorienting dilemmas in travel experience? Because of the uniqueness of travel experience, what is a difficult experience for one may be fun for another. In addition, transformation generally requires some self-examination and personal reflection and a willingness to try new things and new roles. Travel situations may promote such processes when there are a minimum of barriers between the traveler and the location in which they are traveling. For example, travelers, who are alone, or with a small group, would likely experience more potential conflict than someone who is on a tour group, since the latter are typically insulated by their numbers and their arrangements.

In any case the disorienting dilemmas may not be significant enough to effect perspective transformations of the kind discussed by Mezirow. Normally it takes a major life event, such as the death of a spouse to effect such dramatic change. Nevertheless changing meaning schemes and perspective taking are certainly common in travel where there are shallow or slight disorienting dilemmas. In applying Mezirow's theory to adult development Taylor (1993) noted that changes in these meaning schemes are a regular and frequent occurrence in adult life. Within the context of travel, and especially international

travel, one's meaning schemes are constantly under personal evaluation and may well be changed as a result of activities on the trip. When this occurs meaning perspective change and ultimately transformative learning become possible.

Movement within the existential challenges of travel will involve the traveler in a process of negotiating an irregular succession of 'meaning schemes'. Often for the traveler this will include seeing a famous landmark or object for the first time. Learning and change is increased by interaction with locals and by a longer stay. Travelers who come to negotiate a gamut of cultural differences associated with language, customs, and geography such as time, food, money, hotels, are likely to have their meaning schemes changed.

Length of stay and patterns of return are also likely to determine their transformative potential of travel. If there is a tendency to "get back home and get busy", reflection may be inadequate for creating changes in perspective. Many trips lie within the suitcases of unpacked pictures, souvenirs, and unfinished and unread diaries. Extended stays, learning the language, interaction with locals, personal reflections, and seeing things for the first times, can promote meaning perspective and eventual transformation.

The purpose of the study then, was to explore the impact of travel experiences on the older adults. To that end we addressed the following research questions: What types of transformative experiences, if any, do older travelers identify? In what ways is transformative experience

manifested in travel? What are the other issues and conditions that contribute to transformative experience if and when it does occur?

Method

Qualitative interviews were selected as the method for addressing the research questions identified above. For that purpose we sought older individuals who were frequent travelers and likely to have had significant travel experiences.

Sampling

We sent questionnaires to approximately 50 people who were listed in the first author's personal address book. Of this number 26 returned the questionnaire, and from that group eight were chosen for interviews. This purposive sample was chosen because they had indicated in response to the question "Do you sense any personal change because of this trip?," that travel had been meaningful to them.

The participants were three Caucasian married couples, one Caucasian single woman, and one African American single man. Both single participants had been widowed, and the man is also divorced. All participants are involved with their children and grandchildren. All the participants indicated they were in good health, and most participate in various exercise programs. They appear to be financially responsible, and they love to travel. Other common characteristics were all were college educated, religion was mentioned as an important part of

their life, most have traveled extensively, all are retired except for one who was Mr. Belarus.

Data Collection

After the UGA institutional review board approved interviews, each participant was contacted to arrange the interview. The semi-structured interviews were focused around the following questions. Tell me about the trip that was most meaningful to you? What was it, about this trip that had a special meaning for you? Do you sense any change because of this trip? Is there anything else about the trip that impacted you? What is different now because of your trip?

Each interview took place in the home of the participant except for Mr. Brazil; he recorded the answers to the interview questionnaire and mailed the tape to me. Each interview was taped transcribed as quickly as possible. After the first interview I began internally to compare answers with the next interviewee. Since three were married couples, the interviewer (first author) expressly asked them not to answer for one another.

Data Analysis

After each recorded interview was transcribed, responses were coded and mutual categories were generated. These categories were then revised through a process of constant comparison as each subsequent interview was analyzed.

Findings

The most general finding was that there was no evidence of a perspective transformation as a result of traveling in those interviewed in this study. Nor did we identify the truly disorienting dilemmas that would likely bring about such transformation because of the absence of the disorienting dilemma or life event crisis. Nevertheless, there was a clear evidence of change in meaning schemes, as the following will demonstrate. Whether these provide groundwork for transformative learning will be considered in the concluding sections.

The names given to the eight participants bear a special significance. The first couple, Mr. and Mrs. Tandem is so named because on their honeymoon they rode a two-seater bicycle, called a 'tandem' through Latin America. The rest of the participants are named for a certain country that provided significant travel experience for them. We will review each as separate cases and then identify the overall themes that draw them together.

Travel Profiles

Mr. Tandem

Mr. Tandem is 89 years old and has traveled extensively throughout his life. He has been on various unique trips such as "riding a bicycle around the world", "hiking the Appalachian Trail", and described a recent "whale watching" trip as most meaningful, yet he also says he "enjoys all of his travels". He has written two books about his travels.

Mr. Tandem reported "wanting to travel around the world, but not having the money," and "being limited to a bicycle, a bag, a bread satchel, and a canteen." But he regarded it as a challenge to see how inexpensively one could travel. He said he wanted to climb the Matterhorn but did not have the $80 to pay the guide, and not trusting the guide. He also reported being locked out of the city of Jerusalem on one occasion and spending the night in an Olive Grove.

When asked, Mr. Tandem spoke about learning about humanity, hospitality, and adaptability – meeting "whatever comes through the day." In addition Mr. Tandem described experiencing miracles during his many travels, negotiating various trips by traveling on cargo ships, and even riding a bicycle across the world.

Mrs. Tandem

Mrs. Tandem has accompanied Mr. Tandem on many trips, the first one being their honeymoon, where they rode a tandem bicycle through Latin America. She is 81 years old and has mentioned trips in India, Nepal, Turkey, and whale watching. She wrote that a trip to Turkey was most meaningful, but during the interview most often discussed a trip through Europe taken with a niece.

Mrs. Tandem discussed how when in Europe she did not know how to make change. This can present a difficult situation, and one in which many Americans become completely lost.

In response to the question, "What is most meaningful to you in travel?", Mrs. Tandem reflected mostly on the learning aspect of travel. She constantly said, "I learned...." The more she traveled the more she learned about how to travel. She continues by stating how learning that within the train station there is a wealth of information. She became more confident traveling on the trains in Europe, because she knew within the train station she could get everything from food, a shower, a hotel room, and change for money. During these situations, Mrs. Tandem says she "learned to trust people", and learned how to "save time."

Mr. Belarus

Mr. Belarus is age 57, and is the only one of the interviewees that is still working full time. He has been on extensive trips with business and on pleasure. Some of the trips are to Europe, South America, within the USA, but the focus of the discussion became the trip to Belarus.

Mr. Belarus focused the interview on a trip where they had visited their daughter in Belarus. Mr. Belarus identified several situations that answered the research questions of identifying the process within the transformative experience. He said "stark conditions and the political climate" of the country forced him to consider life in a new and different way. He felt "out of place in blue jeans" at a cultural event, when everyone else was very dressed up, however, everyone else was considerably below his financial level.

He mentions several times the impact of "surprise learning", "little things like that…it's the surprise learning, I had no interest in learning about a stirrup, and it just came out…learning about the beheadings in England, they would give the executioner a stipend to make a clean cut, and this became known as severance pay." Another dilemma was on a trip in Europe, he and his wife happened to get a news program from the United States, "many things going on here have no significance over there…we saw in France a news report about Stone Mountain (that is where we are from), and it was about a lady who was seeing Jesus in a plate of spaghetti." He goes on to mention how situations like this are humbling, seeing how other countries are viewing your country. He recounts another negative situation while in "Hong Kong, and I will never forget going into Aberdeen Harbor, and the tour guide said these boat people, have probably never stepped foot on dry land." He couldn't imagine passing by countless boat people, who have never walked on dry land.

Mr. Belarus mentioned several instances where his meaning perspective was changed, "I will never get out of my head seeing all of those women in the market place." Seeing "grandmothers in the market place selling plastic bags" helped him to realize how we are "caught up in materialism." The impact of being in a completely different culture helped him to see how different the world is from the south.

He mentioned how he enjoys "the little squares" in European towns, and he reflected that we are too entertained by music and television. The sense of history and the beauty of the architecture in European cities and villages are something he wants to bring home. Despite not wanting to go to France, he later said he "loves the people, and was really surprised by Normandy." On various trips to the Far East, he says he realizes how often we attempt to force our own human rights on another country's. He feels that as a result of visiting many other countries he is a stronger Christian, and rather than focusing on capitalism he wants to "put first things first."

Mr. Belarus seems to focus on learning, and how he is very curious, and really learns a lot on these trips. He seems to be more aware of the sense of community displayed in European villages and squares, and is more aware of capitalism and materials. Mr. Belarus became aware that the way he approached a trip, is often the way he approaches life (Botterill & Crompton, 1996).

Mrs. Belarus

Mrs. Belarus is 56 years old and has been on many trips, she has also worked as a travel agent. The dominant focus of her discussion was the trip to Belarus. She also mentions how she enjoys not just going to the main points of a city, but looks for the "surprises". Rather than hanging around where all the tourists are, they are looking for places which represent the true country, local villages, cafes, and where they can see and interact with the locals.

Mrs. Belarus was at first overwhelmed with the trip to Belarus. After spending a week in Germany, they flew from Frankfurt to Minsk, Belarus.

> Until you actually see it, you don't realize what it is all about, I was terrified to go out by myself…shopping was a total shock…just everything was so different, it was a real struggle…when you come from a country where everything is laid out for you.

Mrs. Belarus in response to what has impacted her about the trip, says she has learned to appreciate what we have here, and to put things in perspective. "I tried to put things in perspective, what really is important, you know when we get all out of joint about some ridiculous thing that has to do particularly with a purchase, or something material, or if someone breaks in your house, you think now its just a thing…and you can live with a lot less and be quite happy." She also mentions if she returns she wants to learn some of the language so she can interact more with the locals. In another part of the interview she says, "I have really learned to say, now, what is the worst thing that could happen, and I do think a lot about that trip to Belarus, and the choices we had versus the choices we have here, not to be such a consumer as I used to be…when I think about the amount of garbage we have, all the commercialism we now have at Christmas, just the catalogues we have, the number of trees we chop down, that make us think we need things we don't need."

The change in meaning schemes for Mrs. Belarus seems to be in the change in her view of materialism and capitalism. Mrs. Belarus also mentioned during a trip to Italy, when leaving the Vatican, she was "overwhelmed" with the "opulence". She felt the Catholic Church had missed the issues that Peter was a simple fisherman. She stated in one point of the interview her disgust at all the materialism during the holidays, "just the number of catalogues we get." Also, because their life is so different here than the people they saw and met in Belarus, that she will not allow typical or normal problems to bother her. She also mentions how surprises on the trip are important, "getting away from the things you would see here in the USA" by visiting smaller villages, and being with locals.

Mr. Israel

Mr. Israel is 69 years old and is retired. He and his wife have been on a variety of trips. These trips include Italy, Greece, Israel, Canada, and England. In response to what trip has been most meaningful, he and Mrs. Israel were both emphatic about the trip to Israel.

Regarding the research question concerning personal change, Mr. Israel discusses with openness the depth and meaning of the trip to Israel. Of the many trips they have taken this was by far the most meaningful. With excitement, he says, "Being in Jerusalem was so special", and that it is "unusual to stand in the

footsteps of Jesus". "It was a spiritual high, beyond that I don't know, can't put it into words, it just felt really good."

He compared Jerusalem with other "authentic places" but noted that this was special, "it was just really unusual to stand in the footsteps of so many great religious people and especially Jesus." In addition, adding to the significance of the authenticity of being face to face with such a significant place, "You could see on the floor where supposedly there were marks…where the guards were playing some game…that was real, and to know that is where Jesus was…that was a special place…it was an emotional time." He also spoke of being very impressed on a side trip to the tomb of Lazarus where Jesus had healed his friend from death.

As a result of this trip, Mr. Israel feels his faith has been strengthened. "It certainly has carry-over value, and I think about it frequently. It is not something that was just a nice trip…the devotions we had and just how awesome it felt to be there…to say, it's strengthened my faith…I guess it has…but I really never doubted any of those things anyway." Mr. Israel's comments suggest a strong impact of this travel experience though more in strengthening his existing views than changing them.

Mr. Israel is impacted by the authentic places of personal belief in which he visited. He seemed to have a personal and spiritual experience while touching

the very spots about which he has read. Being able to visit and stand in the spot of the person he follows has "strengthened" his faith.

Mrs. Israel

Mrs. Israel is 63 years old and has been on all the trips with Mr. Israel. She stated emphatically that the Israel trip was the most meaningful and that her life is different because of this. Mrs. Israel referred to an element of danger during the trip to Israel, "the tour guide would pray every day for our safety." This realm of danger probably added to the intensity of the experience.

Similar to her husband, Mrs. Israel noted that during the Israel trip, " When we went to the place where they flogged Jesus …that was so emotional for me…I just cried." Discussing her trip, she states, "It made the Bible come alive for you, you could never read these stories again without thinking back to 'I was there!'…It was really a pilgrimage." She also adds,

> Mr. Israel and I both teach Sunday School, I think it's been interesting to us and our classes (we have just finished a three month study of Joshua, and Exodus, and the crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land), to be able to describe to our Sunday School class what the wilderness is…I would have never in my wildest dreams…have thought that the wilderness is as wild as it is…that is just a recent example of what we've experienced, one thing I guess I came to appreciate.

On reflecting on the meaning of the experiences, the difference this trip has made, and the impact of this trip, she points to "education…your perspective…your tolerance of other cultures, and an appreciation of what you have here." She later added, "Broader perspectives of the cultures, you see things that were built 400 years before Columbus came to America…over here {in the USA} 100 years is old!"

Mr. And Mrs. Israel both discussed how their tour leader had a profound impact on their trip. Rather than just being a tour guide, he saw himself as leading them on a pilgrimage. Daily there would be time of reflection, singing, prayer, and an application of what they were learning to their life. Mezirow (1981) discusses the impact of critical reflexivity can be fostered where there is a personalizing of applying insight to one's own life. This tour guide was taking these travelers into a change of meaning perspective by making the authentic holy sites applicable to their daily life.

Mrs. Germany

Mrs. Germany is 82 years old and has been to Europe for three visits, she has also traveled extensively within the USA. Mrs. Germany has participated in several trips to Germany since the death of her husband, to visit her son and his family who live in Germany. To that end she has negotiated traveling alone and sharing accommodations with others. "See, I did not have a roommate, and they were always worried about me, see I would want to stay longer in these shops and

things." On another trip having a roommate that "stuck to me like glue", and was not the person she had chosen, resulted in "having a chip on her shoulder", and in a trip that she "tries to forget". However, during these situations, she feels she has learned she does not need a roommate as well as the importance of being agreeable on group tours.

In response to research questions about the meaning of trips she states, "It was a good time…and I was seeing Europe, and I have never traveled in Europe much, everything was new to me…." This newness, this visiting and seeing something for the first time, is a foundational condition for changing one's meaning perspective. She also discussed how knowing a family in Germany, and living with them, even though they were in laws, really helped her to learn more about this country and its people. "The first time I went, I thought I won't dare mention the war, but they mentioned it first. They said we are so grateful for the Americans and the British for liberating us…" Also she discussed learning about daily life in Germany while staying with this family.

In response to interview questions, Mrs. Germany mentioned that as a result of her trips, she feels "broadened", that her "self-esteem" has increased. She feels more confident about life, and about getting around in Europe and in the USA. She discusses how going on trips is giving her "new ideas", refreshing her, and by "charging her batteries." "I think life can just be a little mundane, and TJ {her dog} and I get a little separation, and we are happy to see each other. And

you come back with some new ideas and refreshed, get your batteries recharged, it is recreation, re-creation!"

On discussing a trip in the USA, when she had been recently widowed, it was one of her first trips traveling alone. On the way back from a military reunion, she decided to stop and tour a Corning factory in New York.

> I had a wonderful time right by myself, I stopped in Corning, New York, and went to the Corning Factory, spent the night, went in that factory, for the whole day, right by myself, saw them making this special glass, the complete process, and spent as much time in the museum as I wanted, and I thought this is great…this was liberating and enjoyable.

This suggests that learning to negotiate the dilemma of life being widowed and being alone, resulted in a change of meaning perspective, rather than being scared and feeling isolated. While the disorienting dilemma of widowhood preceded the travel, her ability to negotiate different situations has clearly changed her view of herself.

Mrs. Germany mentioned the importance of being with locals, as a result of extra time with her in-laws that are Germans. Seeing things for the first time has had a special significance for her. Going on trips has apparently been liberating for her and has contributed to her self-confidence and her sense of freely connecting to the rest of the world.

Mr. Brazil

Mr. Brazil is 75 years old, and has been on a variety of trips. During the interview he mentions an Elderhostel trip to Hawaii, but in response to impact and change he focused on a trip to Brazil. Mr. Brazil is an experienced traveler and he has wanted to visit Brazil for some time, "For many years I had been intrigued with this notion…where during the slave trade, more slaves were taken through that port in Brazil, than in the United States, and I was always interested in how another culture had dealt with this problem of slavery…." His growing realization that there was more institutionalized racism in Brazil than he had previously thought was a source of considerable discrepancy. He mentioned that during Carnival time while all racial groups appeared to be integrated but "some groups were all white, some were all brown skin, some were all black, none of them were very high integrated."

As with many travelers, negotiating a foreign language was a challenge. "I spoke no Portuguese, and English is not spoken there very much either, so I had to do a lot through interpreters and through my host family." But staying with a host family had other effects as well.

> Another thing that made this trip very meaningful for me, was the fortunate circumstance of staying with this couple, she being a native Brazilian, who had spent all of her life there and she spoke very good English and Portuguese, and she was a very good resource, and several

things occurred in our discussions, one of which made her a bit defensive, my questioning about the plight of people....

These daily discussions were forcing Mr. Brazil to weigh the impact of the racial situation within his own meaning schemes. Living with a host family provided a daily interaction with locals concerning every aspect of this trip. From discussions about food, money, the USA, rituals, as well as Carnival, Mr. Brazil learned a great deal. He also felt the host family was perhaps overprotective by carefully guarding him like "body guards" as well as continually looking out for his welfare.

Mr. Brazil was very open about his change of meaning scheme concerning race relations. In contrast to another trip to Hawaii where he saw the natives attempting to regain some of the racial equality that had been lost, he felt in Brazil there was more of an acceptance of the situation. As a result of the host family as well as discussions with others, he felt he had learned a great deal about racial issues within this complex country. He felt that he would not have gained the perspective he did, had he not been immersed within the culture, "...sense of the importance of going and being in the presence of a culture, I am not certain that you could get all of this in any other way, the feeling I had about it, was a very invaluable experience for me."

The meaning schemes were changing for Mr. Brazil as he was personally interacting with the people and the events within the country.

> When I walked the beaches north of Salvador, with my camera, when I was downtown Salvador, when I was in the suburbs of Salvador you see all huge shapes, sizes, configurations of nose – eyes – color just a vast rainbow-like appearance, and this was a very satisfying, and freeing for me I found it very freeing sort of a thing, and there does not seem to on the surface, any sense of racial discrimination. However when you look below the surface, when I look beyond the appearance, …the stratification economically and the sense of power, seems to be more along the lines of skin color….

Mr. Brazil felt that as a result of this trip, he could see race relations in a different light within the USA. "Now, I have an odd appreciation for all of the angst and problems and troubles that we historically have dealt with in this country over race matters…because this is the way you will get change." He later states that the biggest impact for him was to have to change his perspective of the hoped for diversity within this country of Brazil, and that he feels more of an appreciation for the struggles his race has had to overcome within the USA.

Cross Case Comparison

Four themes emerge from the data as we compared the findings. 1). A new perspective on "all that we know". The experiences from architecture, food, money, language, and people resulted in a new dimension of knowledge. 2). A changed sense of self. Mrs. Germany said she was liberated and more self-

confident, and Mr. Israel feels strengthened as a result of visit authentic holy sites. 3). Disrupted assumptions were caused by new experiences. For example, Mr. Brazil could no longer assume a particular perspective of race relations in Brazil, and Mr. Tandem could no longer assume the world was an unfriendly, or hostile place. 4). A deepened sense of understanding or complexification (Csikszentmihalyi, 1977.) Mr. and Mrs. Belarus have a deeper sense of economic impact by staying with their family during a visit to Belarus. Mrs. Tandem feels confident to negotiate the perils of international travel because of a greater understanding of the dynamics of travel.

An additional impact was that of learning. Each participant was eager to share a multitude of details of things they have learned on their trips. Knowledge such as how to get around, the challenge of negotiating difficulties in a foreign country, learning about geography, learning about the places they visit, and becoming more familiar with the local people was expressed by each participant. Mr. Brazil continually discussed how he was continually learning, and revising his own thinking about racial issues within the country of Brazil.

Of special interest was surprise-learning, things that they learned that were unexpected. For example, a couple from North Atlanta, who now feel capable of riding Marta (the subway system in Atlanta, Georgia area), because they had negotiated the Paris subway system. Similarly, Carnival for Mr. Brazil became a classroom on cultural diversity and of racism.

Conditions Leading to Transformation in Travel

Although not necessarily related to the focus of the study, we could not ignore the continued mentioning of various conditions that seemed to lead to transformation in travel. Of special interest here is the role of the tour guide as well as the role of the planning before the trip. Each participant spoke about the role of the tour guide in a trip, "a tour guide can make or break a trip." Even if one is traveling independently, somewhere on a trip, you will encounter and be a part of a tour group. If the tour guide incorporates personal reflection, and is unhurried, allows for discussion and questions, the learning can take on a special significance, and meaning perspective is changed.

Of special note was the tour guide mentioned by Mr. And Mrs. Israel. This man was familiar with the area, he was personally involved, and he also was a fellow pilgrim with this group to the special holy sites in Israel. His purpose in this trip was "renewal" for the participants. From the moment they arrived in the airport, until they returned home this man attempted to teach, to inspire, to encourage discussion, and to impact their life. Every place they went there was discussion beyond what local tour guides would do, an incorporation of personal ramification was included. Daily devotions, daily prayer, and purposeful reflection were part of this particular trip. Such tour guides reflect how a trip can

be used to help meet ones personal needs (Botterill & Crompton, 1996, Milman, 1998).

Another issue mentioned several times by each participant, is seeing something for the first time. The impact of standing in some place that the traveler is familiar with or has heard about, or in some way reveres, has an impact on meaning perspective. Beyond seeing something for the first time, is the additional focus of authenticity. Although seeing American like towns all over the world has its own meaning perspective, "globalization results in sterilization", but seeing the real Germany, or the real France, the real tomb of Jesus compels the traveler to sense that has discovered the authentic. Becoming immersed in the culture as a result of staying with a host family, or by daily interacting with locals also added to the level of authenticity.

Travel in a foreign country brings many potential disorienting dilemmas. Language, money, travel directions, location a certain address all present 'shallow' disorienting dilemmas. Although not a life crisis situation, yet each traveler discussed how learning to get around has resulted in a greater self-confidence and learning. Seeing how these negative situations turn out positive was impact for each person. When things go wrong, the reaction, the learning situations, can be its own important meaning perspective. Like one travelers said, "We are like Mr. Quigley, every day is an adventure, we just get up and go, and see what adventure awaits us!"

Discussion

Rather than transformative change, these well-traveled tourists changed their meaning schemes. Although each traveler encountered various disorienting dilemmas, these were not the life crisis situations on which Mezirow focuses his theory of transformative learning. However, there is enough of the disorienting dilemma to produce this change in meaning perspective that could eventually lead the traveler to a transformative change. Most of these travelers identified learning as the focus of their trip, learning about the destination as well as themselves. Most participants indicated that their experience was "broadening," that some of the "surprises" they expressed changed the way they looked at the world and in some cases how they looked at themselves.

This limited sample of older travelers was unique in some respects, and generalizations should be done cautiously in any case. They are fairly typical of the large growing body of mature, educated, healthy, and financially able older population. Some of these women are experiencing a new lease on life, and are less constrained than at any other time period (Gibson, 1998 and Hawes, 1988). Each of these travelers has become like a personal scientist, discovering what works for him/her in travel, and attempting to use travel as a way to meet personal needs (Botteril & Crompton, 1996, and Ryan, 1998). It could be argued that they are actually seeking their own selves, hoping to sense an inter-personal and intra-personal well being as they are face to face with "foreign" objects (Wang, 1999).

While all of these travelers learned to travel at a younger age, retirement provides the time to pursue their dreams. To the extent that they use travel simply to stay stimulated or maintain appearances, they may be serving continuity needs (Zimmer, Brayley,& Searle, 1995), but to the extend that they let their travel experiences wash over them in some ways, their perspective may well be changed and on rare occasions their lives may be transformed.

Concluding Remarks

Mature and older travelers are in search of meaningful trips. Rather than wasting time in various ports of call, today's traveler has the energy to learn, and a desire to be impacted by his or her world. While it may take a disorienting dilemma to create a perspective transformation of the type discussed by Mezirow, travel does have the potential to change one's meaning perspective, to impact the knowledge one has about the world, and to change the individual in subtle but important ways.

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